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ADDRESS

OF

2510
E. C. CABELL, OF FLORIDA,

TO

HIS CONSTITUENTS.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, August 26, 1850.

At the call of a large portion of my fellow-citizens, by many of whom I have not been sustained in former elections, I have again, contrary to my previous intentions, allowed myself to be announced as a candidate for re-election to Congress.

It is unnecessary for me to express, in detail, my sentiments upon the various issues which have heretofore divided the two great political parties. These sentiments, repeatedly announced, in person, by circulars, and in speeches upon the floor of Congress, are known to you all, and still remain unchanged. Most of these "old issues" have lost their interest from the vast importance properly attached to the *sectional* questions now agitating the country, on which I have taken occasion, during the present session, to make known my opinions; and which subsequent experience and reflection have only confirmed. These opinions, embodied in my late published speech on the slavery question, and my letter to Governor Brown, are my sentiments now.

In the progress of the organization of the House, it became manifest that Northern Representatives, of both parties, had come to Washington with a fixed purpose of attaching the Wilmot proviso to all Territorial Governments. Northern Democrats openly avowed their purpose, in the elegant language of one of them, to "poke the proviso at General Taylor" as a "*punishment* to the South," for refusing to make General Cass president. This act the Southern States are pledged to "resist at every hazard, and to the last extremity."

To secure the just rights of the South, and, at the same time, preserve the Union and protect inviolate the Constitution, are the objects nearest and dearest to my heart, and have been the end and aim of all my actions on sectional questions. You all know me to be a firm and decided Whig; but there are times when we should lose sight of party distinctions. Such a time I consider the present. My first allegiance is to my State, to my section, and to the Union under the Constitution; my last is to my party. For these reasons I refused to co-operate with my party in electing to preside over the House of Representatives, a gentleman for whom I entertained the highest respect, and one eminently qualified for the duties of this office. Under the circumstances attending his nomination, I believed his election would be detrimental to the interests of my section of the Union, and refused to vote for him. I am satisfied that the stand taken in this matter by myself and those Southern Whigs who acted with me, has been eminently

beneficial to the cause of Southern rights, and with that belief I cannot regret it, be the consequences to myself what they may. With the same object, I warmly advocated the assembling of the Convention recently held at Nashville. I believed that the imposing spectacle of delegates from fourteen States of the Union, "counselling together" respecting a common danger, threatening their common interests, could not fail to arrest the attention of the whole country; that through them might be concentrated the public sentiment of the South, where love of Union, *under the Constitution*, is a passion; and that a calm and candid statement of grievances complained of, and a dispassionate appeal from the patriots of the South to the patriots of the North, would prevent the consummation of measures leading to disunion, preserve the honor and rights of the South, and bring back peace and good will to our common country. I knew that in advocating this Convention I would be charged with being a disunionist. But, conscious of the rectitude of my intentions, I pursued the course dictated by my best judgment. I could not suffer myself to be influenced by paltry personal considerations. I had a duty to my State and to the Union to perform, and looked to that alone, as I trust I ever shall, so long as the responsibility of representative action devolves upon me. My reasons for my course, heretofore given, were conclusive to my own mind, and I now regard it as a great misfortune that all the Southern States were not fully represented; for I am perfectly satisfied that much of the solemnity of the movement was necessarily lost, by the want of delegates from every Southern State. Still it has greatly aided the reactionary movement at the North in favor of Southern rights.

Though the time of Congress, since the commencement of the session, has been almost exclusively devoted to this all-absorbing question, nothing has, as yet, been done.

Resolved not hastily to accept or reject any of the numerous plans proposed to adjust the various questions of controversy between the North and the South, I determined to "watch and wait," to examine carefully the provisions of each bill, and to adopt that line of policy best calculated to promote the ends which ought to be attained by a "settlement;" for a settlement, consistent with honor, I most ardently desire, and will advocate, whatever may be its peculiar basis.

A better man, a purer patriot, a more devoted lover of his country, never lived, than the late President of the United States. With the most anxious interest I looked for the mode of adjustment to be proposed by him. But his scheme did not meet with my approval, and I could not give it my support. I hoped for much from the bill reported in the Senate, known as Clay's compromise. With the provisions of this bill you are all familiar. To some of its details I was decidedly opposed, but as a *basis of settlement* I approved it, and anxiously hoped it would be so modified as to justify the support of all who were anxious to adjust these distracting questions on fair and honorable terms. These modifications, I think, could have been made, had it not been for unfortunate differences of opinion among Southern men. The bill, however, was, at last, defeated after a discussion of several months.

A bill for the admission of California into the Union, and another for the settlement of the boundary of Texas, and two others for Territorial Governments in Utah and New Mexico, have passed the Senate. I cannot, in this address, give my opinion of each of these important bills in detail. When the House of Representatives is called upon to act, my votes will be given in accordance with the opinions avowed in my published speeches and letters. I can only say here that I *want a settlement*. I want peace, quiet, and repose for my country. I earnestly desire to get rid of the *agitation*

of the slavery question, which too many are fomenting for selfish purposes. To effect this object, I am willing to sacrifice every thing but the honor of the South. Believing the claim of Texas good, as against our Government, to all the country now in dispute, I cannot consent to deprive her of any portion of it, and to vote to cede away slave territory, till I know whether or not the Wilmot proviso is to be applied to it. Nor can I consent to add to the Free-Soil influence in Congress by voting for the admission of California, till the settlement of the territorial questions, even were there no other objections to her admission with her present Constitution and limits; but I will steadfastly oppose all measures, singly or collectively, which deprive us of our just right to the enjoyment of our common acquisitions.

These bills will, in all probability, pass the House of Representatives with but little modification, during its present session. Collectively, they are but "the compromise bill," which was reported to the Senate by its Committee of Thirteen; and when they shall have received the sanction of the President of the United States, the contingency will have arisen in which I am informed that some among you have declared themselves ready for an immediate dissolution of the Union. As your Representative, I have striven and will strive by every means in my power, to secure your right to the enjoyment of our territorial possessions, and to compose the difficulties threatening the Union. I am wedded to no particular plan of adjustment, but shall adopt the most practicable which does not infringe our honor and our rights. Should I and others representing Southern States fail to effect our object, my duty will have been discharged by such constitutional resistance as I may make in my representative capacity. Never, either as Representative or candidate, will I assume the awful responsibility of recommending to you a dissolution of the Union. That dissolution must be effected elsewhere than in the halls of Congress; and whether or not the measures, fast hastening to their consummation, leave you no alternative but resort to this last and most dreaded remedy of disunion and civil war, it is for you to determine. The responsibility rests not upon me, as your Representative to effect or recommend a severance of your connexion with the Federal Government, and I do not hesitate to confess that, in view of all the evils which must follow either resistance or submission, I shrink from a responsibility which my position does not devolve upon me. I did not transcend my duties in warning you of the dangers which menaced you, in advising you to meet and consult together as to the best mode of guarding against them. You must act, and whatever position you may take, I shall stand with you. But until your decision shall be made, my duty, as I have said, is confined to resisting those measures which I deem oppressive, by such means as the Constitution and laws have placed in my hands as your Representative in Congress.

When or how the complicated questions, growing out of the acquisition of foreign territory, are to be settled, none can tell. This acquisition, with its attendant evils, is likely to prove more fatal than Pandora's box, at the bottom of which *Hope smiled*; but here we are almost without hope. I have ever opposed this acquisition, regarding it as "the forbidden fruit." My advice has been to "touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing."

I have said that it devolves upon you to say whether you will submit to these laws, and adopt retaliatory measures, non-intercourse, &c. within the Constitution, or go out of the Union. My opinion is that a dissolution of the Union is the very last remedy for the evils of which we so justly complain. It cannot be peaceable, and should be resorted to only when you become ready for civil war. But a system of non-intercourse

with those who assail our rights, if adopted and persisted in, would, in my opinion, not only be a serious blow to those who seem so greatly to under-value our connexion with them, and possibly greatly conducive to the re-establishment of a healthy tone of feeling at the North, but would, in any event, be ultimately vastly beneficial to ourselves by developing our own resources, and enabling us to reap the entire benefits of our own agriculture, commerce, and mineral wealth; and would at least, by a dissolution of our commercial dependence upon the North, prepare us for a final separation, should such be rendered necessary and proper, and mitigate the evils which would attend such a rupture. So long as we remain thus dependent upon the North for every thing, for even the most common of our agricultural implements, it is idle to talk of disunion. So long as our merchants and planters flock to Northern cities to lay in their supplies—so long as even those articles of consumption, which are of European manufacture, must be imported by way of New York, whilst our own Southern ports are neglected, and their wharves deserted, it is vain to say that we *even contemplate* disunion as a remedy in the last resort. Such talk will be justly looked upon by all as idle gasconade. Northern men laugh at us, and will not believe we are in earnest in saying we will resist their aggression on our rights, when they look to the condition and actions of the Southern States and people. When nations contemplate war, they make preparation. If you really mean to put yourselves in hostility to the Government, you should imitate their example. *Hostile action* of your Government should be resisted. Before you resort to remedies beyond the Constitution, let us exhaust the remedies within it; let us try our wings before we seek to soar. If we cannot submit to the inconvenience which a cessation of commercial intercourse with the Northern States will subject us to, when our ports are open to all the world besides, rest assured we will not be able to endure, even in defence of our just rights, to have our ports blockaded by Northern navies, and closed against all commerce whatsoever.

In consideration of the importance of these sectional questions, all others sink into utter insignificance; and although it is evident that the political party with which I act is decidedly in the ascendant in our State, I heartily rejoiced at the expression of a hope strenuously urged by the Democratic press, that the people of Florida would “forget party, and unite as Southern men.”

It was my desire to withdraw from public life, but gentlemen of both parties, in every section of the State, urged me, in the name of that cause for which I am ready to peril life and all I hold dear, not to do so. It was represented that while some, chiefly of my political friends, doubted the discretion of some parts of my course, yet, as a whole, it had given general satisfaction, and more particularly to the Democratic party. No sectional issues were therefore to be apprehended calculated to divide our people if my name were presented to you as a candidate. I believed, with my correspondents, that the professions so frequently made were sincere, and not mere hypocritical cant; and when certain gentlemen talked so loudly of the desire to “unite men of the South for the sake of the South,” I did not suppose they meant union for the sake of certain leaders of the Democratic party. I was told that an opportunity to test their sincerity, of which there was no doubt, could be afforded in my person. Reluctantly, and for the sake of effecting what I deemed to be a great good to my section, by preventing dissensions among ourselves, I consented to be a candidate for re-election, without the intervention of a *party caucus*. But I and my friends were mistaken. No sooner was it known that I would probably be a candidate, than these very men who had so loudly professed a

desire for union among Southern men, who had loudly approved my entire course during the present Congress, hoping to take advantage of a difference of opinion between some of my political friends and myself upon the subject of the Nashville Convention and my vote for Speaker, sedulously set themselves to work, and have succeeded in "fanning into a feeble flame the decaying embers" of party strife. At a Convention, recently held at the Suwannee Springs, they nominated as their candidate to oppose me for the next Congress a most worthy gentleman, to whom I must be permitted to express my surprise that he could, at a crisis like the present, when all good men so much deplore party strife and agitation, have permitted himself to be made the instrument of demagogues, (I say it with all respect,) whose highest ambition never soared beyond a miserable party triumph; who, with the spectacle before their eyes of a Congress in which the distinction of Whig and Democrat is lost sight of, and the South is found battling together, and in an emergency when they proclaim that disunion is the only remedy, yet seek for their own selfish purposes to draw party lines once more: at a time, too, when, if their declarations are sincere, they will not be represented in the Congress for which they nominate a candidate, for they will dissolve the Union and break up the Congress. What a commentary the conduct of these gentlemen is upon their own loud-tongued declamations in favor of Southern rights! How sincere must be their desire to see these agitating questions settled, when in lieu of the gathering of munitions of war, and the marshalling of armies, which, from the positions of some among them would be supposed to occupy their minds, their whole energies are directed to the election of a *Democratic candidate for Congress!* I do not speak thus because I fear opposition, for it is only the unworthy servant who fears to have his conduct examined, and I am not conscious of having done any thing to render me less deserving of the favor of my fellow-citizens than heretofore. Nor do I doubt the result of the next election. That I shall be triumphantly sustained by you, I have the most perfect confidence; but I heartily deprecate a *party squabble* at such a period in the history of the Southern States.

But I have a right to complain that many of my opponents have stooped to the basest slander and misrepresentation. An obscure paper called the "Ancient City," published in St. Augustine, contains many articles of this kind. In a late number of that paper a "grave charge" is made in these words: "Had this gentleman laid aside party zeal, and patriotically legislated for his country, the two years agitation in and out of Congress on the application of the Wilmot proviso to the Territories would not have occurred." If this be true, I deserve to be branded as *traitor*. To prove this "grave charge," the editor proceeds to give the vote on the Senate bill known as "Clayton's compromise," and concludes by saying, "who can doubt that had Mr. Cabell, with his Southern Whig brethren, gone for the Senate bill, that Territorial Governments without the proviso would have been enacted for all those Territories, and thereby our country saved from civil war, which now threatens it." A paper, somewhat more notorious, printed at Jacksonville, has repeatedly made the distinct charge that "I voted to lay this compromise bill on the table." Now, without stopping to speak of the merits of the bill, I will only say that it is *not true* that I voted to lay it on the table. The record shows that I voted on the motion to lay on the table, and on the only other vote taken on this bill, with the representatives from South Carolina, and the great body of the Southern delegation. The editors of these papers *knew these facts*, and yet they willfully falsify the record.

I will not waste time by undertaking to defend myself against such charges made by such men. It is utterly untrue that I have contributed to defeat any measure of satisfactory adjustment of the slavery question. Other charges are made in editorials and communications in these two little newspapers, which are equally unworthy of credence, and in many cases they are as impudent as they are reckless and false. *Falsus in uno falsus in omnibus.* I shall take no further notice of them.

You know me, fellow-citizens, and perhaps some of your neighbors can tell you who are the conductors of these papers. I am told that not one of these would-be guardians of Southern rights is by birth a Southern man. Far be it from me to express doubts of their devotion, or of that of other adopted citizens of the South, to Southern interests. I will admit they are *as true* to the South as I am. But when men like them falsely charge me and other native-born Southern men and slaveholders with want of fidelity to our section, they must expect to be rebuked. I am sure no Southern-born man, who is not indeed a traitor to his country, will seek to foment sectional jealousies among those having a common interest to protect, and which is endangered, and to inspire want of confidence and distrust among Southern people, at a time when we should be banded together as brothers. Never was there so great a necessity for good will, harmony, and union among Southern men. Our safety, our very existence, demands the cultivation of the most fraternal feeling. Yet there are those who would make us enemies.

What I have said on this subject has been said in self-defence. To Major Beard I beg leave to say on this question of slavery, in the language of the Patriarch of old, "Let there be no strife between me and thee, between my friends and thy friends, for we be brethren."

The interests of the slavery question, involving as they do, the existence of the Union, is so absorbing, that the attention of Congress cannot be directed to matters of local concern, the consideration of which has necessarily been deferred. I cannot, therefore, meet the captious objection of a certain loud-talking partisan of my State, who asks "what has Mr. Cabell done for his constituents?" I am in the position of every other member of Congress, this session. None of them have been able to procure special legislation for their constituents. This is a necessary consequence of the distracted state of the country.

I have not, however, been unmindful of your peculiar interests. All the necessary appropriations for the survey of public lands and private land claims, for the survey of the reefs, for the dry dock and navy yard, for fortifications, light-houses, &c., have been provided for in the civil and diplomatic bill.

Our mail facilities have been much extended, perhaps doubled; and I am happy to say that, in this regard, the Post Office Department evinces a more liberal feeling than formerly.

A bill promising immense advantage to our State, has passed the Senate, and will I doubt not become a law. With the amendments which have been made by the committee on Public Lands of the House, this bill cedes to the State all the swamp and overflowed lands, the benefits of which will at once suggest themselves.

Another bill, in which a vast number of you are interested, has passed the House of Representatives, and is now pending before the Senate. The very large majority by which it passed the House, gives me reason to say with confidence, that I believe the Senate will concur in its adoption. This bill makes a grant of land of from 40 to 160 acres, proportionate to service, to all who served in the late war with Great Britain, and in the Seminole war.

The liberal disposition exhibited in regard to donations of land to the States to aid in construction of railroads, authorizes me to express the confident hope that the railroad bill, in which the citizens of Pensacola are specially interested, and which failed last Congress by a very small vote, will pass even at the present session.

Literally, nothing has been done for private claimants by this Congress. I have found it exceedingly difficult to induce committees to make reports. So much are the minds of members engrossed by the absorbing topic of slavery, and so little prospect is there that private claims can even have a hearing before the House. Not one, even of the ordinary general appropriation bills necessary to carry on the operations of government, has been finally acted on. The bill making appropriations to defray the expenses of the Florida volunteers last fall, with others, in which many of you are interested, is on the calendar. But these bills cannot be taken up out of their order. Individuals, all over the Union, are suffering like yourselves. Indeed the difficulties and delay in the administration of justice to private citizens, by Congress, amounts to a positive *denial of justice*. A remedy for this crying evil is proposed by the creation of a Board of Commissioners, to sit in the city of Washington, whose duty it will be to examine and decide upon all private claims against the Government. I have warmly advocated this proposition, and such a bill has been recommended by the appropriate committee, and will I hope, become a law. The duty of Congress to make some such provision for the relief of claimants, suggests itself so strongly to the sense of justice of every man, that I cannot doubt its adoption, so soon as subjects of urgent public interest shall have been disposed of. I must crave the indulgence of those of my fellow-citizens who have claims before Congress entrusted to me. I have done all in my power to have justice done them, but my efforts have been defeated by the circumstances I have mentioned.

The removal of the Indians from our State has engaged my most anxious attention. On this subject I shall in a few days address a communication to one of the newspapers of our State, to which I beg to refer you.

This address has been, I fear, already too much protracted—I hasten to a close. Permit me to say, in conclusion, that the duties of a Representative from the State of Florida are more onerous than those of any other member of Congress. He is the sole Representative of a new State, with a vast body of unsold and unsurveyed public lands, with a navy yard and two fortifications in process of construction; and having recently emerged from a protracted internal war, giving rise to a multiplicity of demands upon the General Government. But for all the labors he necessarily undergoes, he is richly repaid by the partial favor of his constituents. I have, to the best of my ability, endeavored faithfully to discharge my whole duty to you. Should you deem me worthy to be continued as your representative, I shall feel under increased obligation to devote every faculty of my nature to the promotion of your interests; and with the experience of three years, it cannot fail to be in my power to serve you with greater efficiency; much time is required to learn even the forms of legislation.

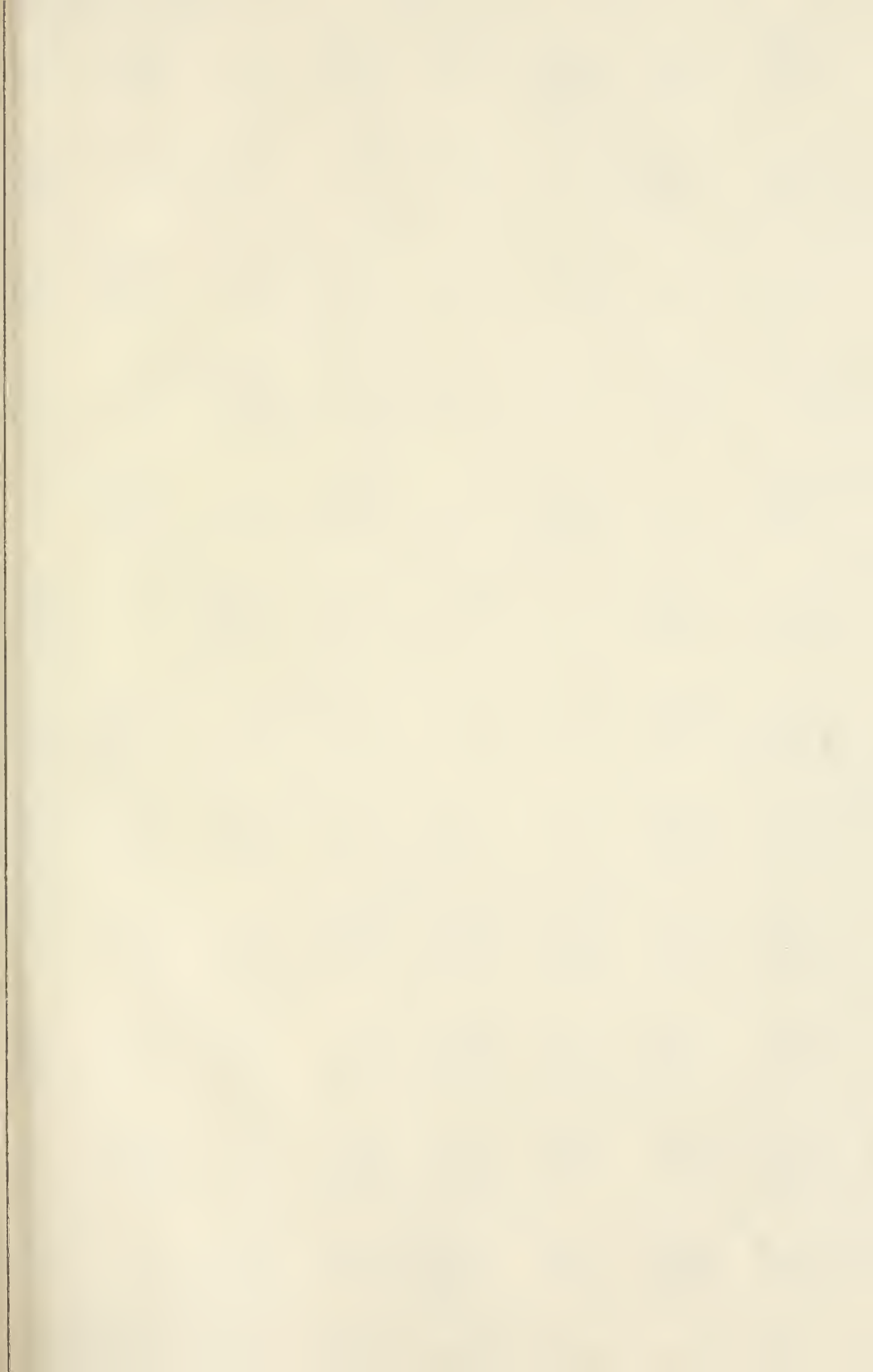
I have hoped, until recently, that I would be saved the necessity of this long communication, for I earnestly desired to meet you face to face, and to *talk with you* about all the matters of which I have written. This pleasure, however, I cannot enjoy. There is no prospect that Congress will adjourn before the first of October; and regard for your interest forbids me to abandon my seat at such a time as this. To your hands I commit myself. To those who think my conduct merits approbation, I appeal to see that advantage be not taken of my absence in the public service. Past experience has shown that

I may expect slander and misrepresentation from some of my partizan opponents. I have only to ask that you "receive with many grains of allowance," stories inconsistent with your knowledge of my character.

The honor of representing the State of Florida, is one of which I feel justly proud. Your past favors have endeared and bound me to you by ties which nature alone can sever. Yet I ask you to add to the obligations I am already under. I confess I feel an interest in the approaching election I have never known before. The position I have taken, the devotion I have manifested in the cause of Southern rights, have induced many, some even of my own friends, to pronounce me "extreme and *ultra*." I have been tauntingly told by enemies of the South, that I do not represent Southern sentiment, and will be repudiated by my constituents. I do not believe it. Your failure to re-elect me to a position in which I have defended, with perhaps, "more zeal than discretion," your constitutional rights, will be hailed with joy by those who would trample on those rights. I would not thus "give aid and comfort" to our foes. I would not produce the impression that Southern men will not "stand by those who stand by the South." Under the circumstances in which I come before you, it will be peculiarly gratifying to be *endorsed by a decided expression* of your approbation; and of this I do not permit myself to doubt.

Your fellow-citizen, and obedient servant,

E. C. CABELL.







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